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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An analytical system for facilitating decision making given a situation by generating and accessing arguments, wherein each argument has supports an associated conclusion as to whether the given situation will likely have a negative or positive result, the analytical system comprising:

a database for storing a plurality of templates that each include a plurality of questions which when answered generate a particular argument having supporting an associated conclusion regarding a particular situation that is based on answers to its associated template questions; and

an argument server comprising:

means for a user to select one of the templates which is most relevant to the given situation

means for receiving answers to one or more of the selected template's questions from said user;

means for receiving supporting evidence from said user in response to said one or more of the selected template's questions, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the answers;

means for associating said supporting evidence with said answers to said template questions;

means for generating a new argument having supporting an associated conclusion, the argument being based on such answers ~~and supporting evidence~~, the associated conclusion indicating whether the given situation will likely have a positive or negative result; and

means for publishing said new argument, including said answers, said supporting evidence and said associated conclusion, for review.

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2. (Cancelled)
3. (Previously Presented) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a plurality of children questions is automatically answered by answering the parent's children questions.
4. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein the argument server is further configured to associate a rationale with each answer to each template question.
5. (Previously Presented) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein input to one or more of the selected template's questions is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.
6. (Previously Presented) An analytical system as recited in claim 5, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.
7. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 6, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.
8. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each template question is a multiple choice question.
9. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 8, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the particular situation have a positive or negative result.

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10. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 9, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of answers that partition the likelihood scale.

11. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 9, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein the argument server is further configured to automatically answer a parent question having a plurality of children questions based on answers to the parent's children questions.

12. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow more than one answer for each question.

13. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein the parent question is automatically answered using an answering technique selected by a user.

14. (Previously Presented) An analytical system as recited in claim 13, wherein the answering technique is selected from a group consisting of a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

15. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein each answer within the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color representing a different answer so that the hierarchical structure's colors convey a line of reasoning.

16. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 11, wherein one or more template questions is associated with a second hierarchical structure of questions and the first and second hierarchical structures together form a set of cascaded arguments.

17. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein one or more template questions have an associated discovery tool that facilitates answering of such

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associated template question.

18. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein each template is associated with a situation descriptors and the argument server selects one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation by comparing a current situation to the situation descriptors associated with the templates to thereby find the most relevant templates having the most closely matching situation descriptors.

19. (Original) An analytical system as recited in claim 1, wherein the argument server is further configured to allow creation of a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

20. (Currently Amended) A method for facilitating decision making given a situation by accessing or generating an argument having supporting a conclusion for the given situation, the method comprising:

presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions;

receiving from said user a selection of one of said templates, said one of said templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

receiving from said user one or more answers to one or more questions of the relevant template;

receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said one or more questions, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the answers;

associating said supporting evidence with at least one answered template question;

forming a new argument having supporting a conclusion, the argument being based on the one or more answers and said supporting evidence; and

publishing said new argument, including said at least one answered template question, said supporting evidence and said conclusion, for review.

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21. (Cancelled)

22. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 20, further comprising associating a rationale provided by said user to each answered template question.

23. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, wherein a parent question that has a plurality of children questions is automatically answered by answering the parent's children questions.

24. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein input to one or more of the selected template's questions is received from a plurality of users over a computer network.

25. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 24, the method further comprising allowing one or more of the plurality of users to generate and associate comments to at least a portion of the new argument.

26. (Original) A method as recited in claim 25, wherein the comments are only accessible by one or more specified users.

27. (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein each template question is a multiple choice question.

28. (Original) A method as recited in claim 27, wherein each multiple choice question asks to what degree of likelihood will a particular factor related to the particular situation have a positive or negative result.

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29. (Original) A method as recited in claim 28, wherein each multiple choice question has a categorical scale of likelihood represented by a set of answers that partition the likelihood scale.

30. (Original) A method as recited in claim 28, wherein each template's questions are formed in a hierarchical structure, the method further comprising automatically answering a parent question having a plurality of children questions based on answers to the parent's children questions.

31. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 30, the method further comprising receiving more than one answer for at least one question.

32. (Original) A method as recited in claim 30, wherein the parent question is automatically answered using a answering technique selected by a user.

33. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 32, wherein the answering technique is selected from a group consisting of a maximization technique, an averaging technique, and a minimization technique.

34. (Original) A method as recited in claim 30, wherein each answer within the hierarchical structure has a color selected from a subset of colors, each color representing a different answer so that the hierarchical structure's colors convey a line of reasoning.

35. (Original) A method as recited in claim 30, wherein one or more template questions is associated with a second hierarchical structure of questions and the first and second hierarchical structures together form a set of cascaded arguments.

36. (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein one or more template questions have an associated discovery tool that facilitates answering of such

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associated template question.

37. (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, wherein each template is associated with a situation descriptors, the method further comprising selecting one of the templates which is most relevant to a particular situation by comparing a current situation to the situation descriptors associated with the templates to thereby find the most relevant templates having the most closely matching situation descriptors.

38. (Original) A method as recited in claim 20, the method further comprising creating a new template, wherein the new template is created by an expert.

39. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium containing program instructions for facilitating decision making given a situation by accessing or generating an argument ~~having~~ supporting a conclusion for the given situation, the computer readable medium comprising:

computer code for presenting to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions;

computer code for receiving from said user a selection of one of said templates, said one of said templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

computer code for receiving from said user one or more answers to one or more questions of the relevant template;

computer code for receiving from said user supporting evidence in response to said one or more questions, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the answers;

computer code for associating said supporting evidence with at least one answered template question;

computer code for forming a new argument ~~having~~ supporting a conclusion, the argument being based on the one or more answers and said supporting evidence;

computer code for publishing said new argument, including said answers, said supporting evidence and said conclusion, for review; and

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a computer readable medium that stores the computer codes.

40. (Currently Amended) A computer system operable facilitate decision making given a situation by accessing or generating an argument having supporting a conclusion for the given situation, the computer system comprising:

one or more processors;

one or more memory, wherein at least one of the processors and memory are adapted to:

present to a user a plurality of searchable templates, wherein each template includes a plurality of questions;

receive from said user a selection of one of said templates, said one of said templates being a relevant template most related to the given situation;

receive from the user one or more answers to one or more questions of the relevant template;

receive from the user supporting evidence in response to the one or more questions, the supporting evidence being relied on by the user to form at least one of the answers;

associate the supporting evidence with at least one of the one or more answers;

form a new argument having supporting a conclusion, the argument being based on the one or more answers ~~and the supporting evidence~~; and

publish the new argument, including the one or more answers, the supporting evidence and the conclusion, for review.